

DEL RIO MILITARY RESERVATION.

APRIL 1, 1896.—Committed to the Committee of the Whole House and ordered to be printed.

Mr. HULL, from the Committee on Military Affairs, submitted the following

REPORT:

[To accompany H. R. 7395.]

The Committee on Military Affairs, to whom was referred the bill (H. R. 7395) to authorize the Secretary of the Treasury of the United States to reconvey to the former owners a certain tract of land in Valverde County, Tex., having considered the same, report the bill back to the House with a recommendation that it do pass.

This land was donated to the United States by the San Felipe Agricultural Company in 1880 for military purposes, and was occupied by a detachment of troops until 1891, when military occupation ceased. All the materials possessing any present value which were placed upon the land in the way of improvements by the War Department have recently been removed.

Herewith attached is a communication from the War Department, which states that the Department will offer no objection to legislation having the object of vesting the title of these lands to the original owners.

WAR DEPARTMENT, OFFICE OF THE SECRETARY,
Washington, February 17, 1896.

SIR: Acknowledging receipt of your letter of the 8th instant, I have the honor to say, by direction of the Secretary of War, that Congressional authority for the return of the Del Rio Military Reservation to its original owners is indispensable. This land, the area of which is about 408 acres, was donated to the United States for military use by the San Felipe Agricultural Company in 1880, and in 1882 was accepted by the United States, under the act of Congress approved April 16, 1880. The deed of conveyance was dated April 15, 1880, but recites no condition that the land shall be applied to any particular purpose, although the correspondence connected with the transaction clearly indicates that the establishment and maintenance of a military post at this point was one of the considerations prompting the donation.

A detachment of troops was kept at Del Rio from 1876 to 1891, upon which latter date military occupation ceased. The buildings and other improvements placed upon the land by the War Department were of considerable value, and all materials possessing any present value have recently been removed to Fort Clark, Tex.

The act of Congress approved July 5, 1884, makes it the duty of the President to cause abandoned military posts to be turned over to the Secretary of the Interior, and it is by the same act made the duty of the last-named public officer to cause such lands to be sold, and the Del Rio Reservation will be disposed of under this act unless Congress shall otherwise direct.

As the purpose of the donation of these lands to the United States has not apparently been attained, it would seem no more than right and proper that the property should be restored to the original donors, but this is a matter that Congress only can pass upon, and I am authorized to state that the War Department will interpose no objection to legislation having the object of vesting the title of these lands in the original owners.

Yours, very respectfully,

GEO. W. DAVIS,
Major, United States Army.

Hon. GEO. H. NOONAN,
House of Representatives.